

7 July 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Strategic Research  
THROUGH : Deputy Chief, Strategic Evaluation Center  
SUBJECT : Role of Civil Defense in Soviet Strategy



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2. Soviet military thought assigns civil defense a supporting role in overall military strategy.

Deterrence. The Soviet concept of deterrence relies on convincing potential enemies that they cannot win a war against the USSR. Should deterrence fail, the Soviets have a declared goal of "victory" in nuclear war, although the exact meaning of "victory" to the Soviets has never been clear. Civil defense is assigned a dual role in this scheme: to maintain a functioning logistical base for operations by regular armed forces to "win" the war; and to enable Soviet recovery from war damage. In the Soviet view the capability of civil defense to contribute to "victory" directly enhances deterrence.

Supporting the War Effort. Soviet strategists have assigned to civil defense the mission of "maintaining continuous economic activity" during a war in support of operations by regular military forces.

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Soviet civil defense planners categorize industrial plants according to whether the plants are essential to the war effort. Essential plants will theoretically continue to operate until imminent warning of a nuclear strike, when the on-duty work shift will take shelter. After the strike civil defense formations composed of workers from the off-duty shift will enter the target area to rescue trapped workers and restore production. Plans have also been developed to restore transportation lines damaged by the strike.

Short vs. Long Warning Times. Before 1968-1970, when adequate warning was expected, evacuation measures were the primary means of protecting people. Since 1968-1970, Soviet planning has emphasized short warning and mobilization. This has impelled the Soviets to undertake the present shelter program. In the Soviet view the shelter program has the advantage of not alerting the United States in the event of a possible Soviet preemptive strike, of faster reaction in the event of a sudden US strike, and of freeing transportation assets for other military purposes.

3. A more complete description of Soviet civil defense doctrine is in the attached paper taken from a draft of the Interagency Intelligence Memorandum on Soviet Civil Defense now in preparation.



Acting Chief  
Special Projects Team,  
Strategic Evaluation Center, OSR

Attachment:

Pp. 5-16 of  
Draft IIM on  
Soviet Civil  
Defense ([redacted])

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